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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a practicum project that involved teaching 14 students (ages 8 through 13) with physical disabilities (cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy) to plan, organize, and complete projects and assignments independently. The paper explains the low expectations for the students and the students' lack of experience in planning and evaluating their work or the work of others. The interventions used by the teacher are described. They include: (1) preparing students for working in the mainstream by giving them experience in developing rubrics to help organize and evaluate their work; (2) developing authentic activities designed to engage the students in real-life situations; and (3) giving students the experience and tools necessary for accomplishing projects independently. A review of the literature on alternative assessment, work quality, and rubrics is provided. Among project outcomes reported are the following: an increase in the percentage of completed projects; a decrease in the number of recorded disruptive behavior incidents; and an increase in the positive attitude of students toward completing projects. Appendices include measures used in the practicum and sample rubrics developed. (Contains 13 references.) (CR)

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UTILIZING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES WITH PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS TO INCREASE WORK COMPLETION AND IMPROVE WORK QUALITY

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A Practicum Internship Final Report
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Advancement of Education of Nova Southeastern
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requirements for the degree of
Master of Science.

June 25, 1996

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Abstract

Utilizing Alternative Assessment Techniques with Physically Impaired Students to Increase Work Completion and Improve Work Quality. Thomas, Traci L., 1996. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University,
Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Alternative Assessment/ Authentic Assessment/ Dynamic Assessment/ Rubrics/ Work Completion/ Work Quality.

This program was developed in an effort to assist students with the development and completion of quality assignments and projects. The target group, comprised of 14 physically impaired students was involved in organization and completion of authentic class projects by utilizing product and procedural rubrics in the planning and evaluation of the projects. Strategies included the development of rubrics, identification of objectives, and authentic activities designed to engage the students in real-life situations. The objectives for the program were for 80 percent of the students to rate their participation in the projects as a positive experience as measured by the Project Attitude Survey; reduce the number of behavior indicators for work completion on progress reports by 80 percent; and complete projects with 70 percent accuracy as measured by the rubrics developed in class. All program objectives were met with the target group with the exception of the 70 percent accuracy rate of the projects. Appendixes include a Project Attitude Survey, a parent permission letter, a procedural rubric for desk organization, a product rubric for homework assignments, a product rubric for storytelling, a procedural rubric for a how-to project, and a product rubric for a state report.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

This practicum was implemented in a suburban elementary school in the southeastern region of the United States. The school was four years old and had an abundance of resource materials as well as technological equipment. The site was a neighborhood school for the majority of the students. These students came from professional families of high socioeconomic status. However, a small percentage of the school population was comprised of exceptional students, bused from an area approximately 10 miles away and populated by low-income families. Thirty-three percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch for the current school year.

According to the School Improvement Team Executive Summary for the 95-96 school year, the three target goals were to increase participatory learning, to utilize school-wide technology, and to provide inservice training for the instructional staff. The action plan included such activities as the utilization of cooperative learning techniques, the organization of a school-wide calendar, and planning an additional school fund raiser in an effort to obtain an aide for the computer lab. The school's vision statement read as follows: The students will become productive contributors to society as life-long learners and decision makers in harmony with self and others.

The student population consisted of 1,329 students attending kindergarten through sixth grade. The ethnic profile of the student population was white (68 percent), black (15 percent), Hispanic (10 percent), and Asian (seven percent). There were 732 male and 597 female students. The average daily attendance for the total school population was 92.5 percent.

The school was situated in a newly developing community which was growing steadily. The average class size was 28. The school mobility rate was 65.3 percent which was above the district percentage of 46.2.

The school had a young teaching staff with 29 percent of the teachers in their first or second year of experience. There were 57 instructional personnel, three administrators, and 18 non-instructional personnel. The ethnic profile of the teaching staff was white (87 percent), black (eight percent), and Hispanic (five percent). Fourteen teachers and seven non-instructional staff members worked with exceptional students.

The school site had a number of exceptional student programs. There were five teachers working in a resource setting with intermediate gifted students and one teacher worked in a collaborative model with primary gifted students. One teacher of the emotionally handicapped and two teachers of specific learning disabilities worked in a resource room with 64 students eligible for part-time services.

The site was one of ten elementary schools in the district serving students with physical and health impairments. The program for the physically impaired at this school included a preschool, a primary, and an

intermediate class. These classes were primarily self-contained with mainstreaming done on an individual basis.

The author was in her ninth year of teaching experience and was in her fourth year of teaching at this particular site. The author was a member of the School Improvement Team and the Mainstream Committee. For eight years the author taught grade three in the regular education setting. This was the author's first year teaching the intermediate class for the physically impaired.

The author's class was comprised of 14 students ranging in ages from eight to 13 years. All of the students were living with a physical or health impairment. The physical impairments were all orthopedic and included cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy. Two of the students were eligible for exceptional student services because of health conditions. One of the students was a survivor of a kidney transplant and the other student suffered from frequent seizures as a result of a brain tumor.

The class included third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Seven of the students were female and seven were male. Six of the students were black, six were white, and two were Hispanic. Two of the students were working on grade level and were mainstreamed into a regular class for most of the school day. Four of the students were mainstreamed for approximately two hours a day for social reasons. The rest of the class participated in as many activities with non-disabled peers as possible.

As the teacher for the intermediate class of physically impaired students, the author had noticed that the majority of her students lacked the

motivation, interest, and understanding necessary to develop quality projects and assignments. The students of the physically impaired class should have learned to plan, organize, and complete projects and assignments independently. There was a discrepancy between the number of classwork, homework, and projects assigned and the number of classwork, homework, and projects completed successfully. There was a need for the students to identify the important components of a quality assignment and understand what makes an assignment exemplary.

During the first and second grading periods of the school year, the author documented that 79 homework assignments were late, incomplete, or never submitted to the teacher. Also, 98 classroom assignments were not completed. Thirty-two book report/projects, that are assigned bimonthly, were never completed by individual members of the class. According to the students' report cards for the current school year, the behavior indicator for completing homework appeared 17 times. The behavior indicators for completing classwork, working independently, and planning and organizing work appeared nine, seven, and six times respectively.

The students in the target group have not been expected to work on projects independently. They have not had experience in planning and evaluating their work or the work of others. The students in the target group have had assistance from teachers and paraprofessionals because of the exceptional classroom setting. The author hoped to prepare these students for the mainstream by giving them experience in developing rubrics in an effort to help them organize and evaluate their work. Another

possible cause for the problem addressed was the lack of interest and support the students received from their families. The author decided to approach the issue by giving the students the experience and tools necessary for accomplishing projects independently.

The author observed a need to improve the quality of assignments and projects produced by students in the target group. The goal of the author was to introduce and develop a variety of assessment rubrics to increase the number of quality assignments and projects completed by the target group. A second goal was to involve students in the target group in projects that are authentic in nature to improve attitude and motivation toward completion of these projects.

The outcomes developed for this practicum were as follows: After twelve weeks of participating in the development of rubrics to assess performance-based projects, the students will produce quality assignments with 70 percent accuracy as measured by the rubrics developed in class

After twelve weeks of developing rubrics to assess performance-based projects, the students' progress reports will reflect a decrease in the number of behavior indicators. This, to include work completion, planning and organizing work by 80 percent as measured by the number of indicators recorded on individual progress reports for the fourth grading period of the current school year.

After 12 weeks of participating in the creation of authentic, performance-based projects 80 percent of the students will demonstrate a positive attitude toward the development of projects as measured by the teacher-made Project Attitude Survey (Appendix A, 32).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

The author reviewed the literature available to her in an effort to examine possible solutions to the problem. A myriad of journals and documents presented studies relating to this program. Alternative assessment, work quality, and rubrics were three of the topics researched.

In an article by Linn and Burton (1994) the generalizabiltiy of performance-based assessment was discussed. The authors acknowledged that performance-based assessments are preferred in many cases because they engage students in meaningful activities. But when discussing the issue of consistency in measurement, important questions remain. When a student is evaluated by a teacher, subjectivity plays a role in the way in which the performance is evaluated.

In certain studies a high level of generalizability has been achieved across several different raters for the same performances. According to the authors of this article, generalizability was achieved when a well-defined rubric was utilized. The rubrics used in the studies reviewed in this article were similar to a scoring guide. The authors emphasized the importance of training raters and monitoring them during the rating sessions.

In an article by Frechtling (1991) the advantages of using performance-based assessments were examined. The author described performance-based assessment as anything that is not a multiple-choice, paper and pencil test. Performance-based assessments require students to participate in activities that are realistic and often more complex.

Although the benefits of performance-based assessment are obvious in the classroom, the author of this article questioned the use of performance-based assessment in large-scale testing programs. The author conveyed the message that different types of testing may be used to test different types of knowledge. It seems that educators and policymakers have relied on norm-referenced tests as the predominant indicator of academic achievement. However, a balance between subjectivity and objectivity should be attained.

Katims, Nash, and Tocci (1993) examined a performance-based mathematics program for middle school students. The Packets Program was developed by the Educational Testing Service. The activities in the program enabled teachers to assess instruction while the students are actively engaged in the learning process.

The Packets Program followed a sequence of activities. First the students were introduced to a real-life problem from a newspaper article. The students were encouraged to brainstorm for solutions in cooperative groups. Students were then required to give presentations on a solution related to a mathematical idea. Finally, the class was engaged in a follow-up discussion, as well as additional whole-group problem solving activities. Based on the philosophy of the program, students were encouraged to apply mathematics to the real world.

The authors felt that this program promoted collaboration among students and allowed them to make connections across a variety of subjects and concepts. Students also had an opportunity to evaluate and revise their responses in an effort to improve the quality of their work. The problems presented in the program did not limit students to one solution. The students learned that different strategies may be equally effective in solving problems.

Authentic assessment and authentic learning assist students in connecting facts and figures with situations in the real world. One example of an authentic learning project was the creation of a classroom garden. This project was the focus of an article by Provost-Clausing and Jacobsen (1993). The authors explained that classroom gardening allowed students to practice skills that were taught in the classroom.

Authentic learning activities were presented for each month. In September students began plans for creating the garden. Measurement and estimation skills were utilized in determining the location and size of the garden. Predictions were made on the size and number of plants anticipated. Reading and writing were incorporated when decisions were made on the type of seeds best suited for the soil and climate. Observations were recorded in journal entries and individual calendars. As the school year progressed, students observed and constructed graphs representing the different insects and birds found in the garden. Students used research skills to learn more about a particular creature. A myriad of skills and responsibilities were involved in caring for the classroom garden.

Rubrics can be used with more traditional methods of assessment. In a study completed by Rockwell (1994) homebound students were assessed with a holistic scoring rubric following a comprehensive writing program. The researcher designed a program that took five eighth grade students through a wide range of essential writing skills. The students were also expected to use their writing skills in a variety of essays including expository writing, biographical compositions, and persuasive essays.

The goal of the study was to improve the students' writing abilities, so that each student gained at least three points on a holistic scoring rubric designed for a writing exam. Focus, organization, support, and conventions were the four elements scored on the rubric. The objective of the study was not achieved with the target group. However, the author revealed that through her personal observations the students in the target group demonstrated a greater amount of confidence in their writing.

In a case study completed by Leitner & Trevisan (1993) the implementation of a portfolio assessment was used to evaluate a Chapter I Program. This particular study examined what teacher behavior factors are associated with the implementation of a portfolio assessment system and what effect this type of assessment has on instructional strategies. teachers involved in the study participated in a three-day inservice on portfolios assessment and rubrics. The teachers completed questionnaires and granted interviews to discuss their experiences during the implementation of the program.

The teachers analyzed the goals and objectives of the Chapter I Program and they determined what specific components of the curriculum

would best be suited for the portfolio program. The next step was to identify the most appropriate method for assessment. The teachers developed holistic rubrics to evaluate descriptive writing. To evaluate literal comprehension, it was decided that webbing and investigations would be the most appropriate methods for evaluating this skill.

The case study identified several factors necessary for successful implementation of a similar program. The teachers emphasized that district support in the form of staff development would be crucial. Another concern expressed by the teachers was the question of whether or not the portfolios would be used instead of traditional grades.

Wolf and Gearhart (1993) focused on the importance of writing assessment as a tool for instruction. The authors supported the idea that the teacher's role in assessing students' writing is one of a facilitator. As teachers dialogued with their students, reflection, analysis, and growth are eminent.

The authors designed a rubric which allows a teacher to evaluate a student's narrative writing of any genre. The rubric rated the components of a narrative on a continuum or scale without using numerical scores. For example, the characters in the story were rated somewhere between flat, if they were static and unchanging throughout the story; or round, if they were well-developed with an emotional as well as a physical description. The plot of the narrative could be evaluated in the same way. A simple plot would lack action and excitement, but a complex plot would involve some type of tension. A student's work could be rated and marked in any one of six places between the two descriptions.

The authors explained that the rubric was not designed for grading purposes, but for assessment and instruction. The authors believed that most writing assessments did not allow for the complexity and wide-range of skills among young writers.

Lockledge and Hayn (1992) designed a workshop to assist teachers in using open-response questions to evaluate their students' understanding of concepts. The rationale for the study was based on the assumption that assessment should allow for authenticity by measuring depth of understanding. Open-ended questions enable students to use higher order thinking skills and to apply knowledge.

The participants constructed open-ended questions and prepared rubrics to accompany the questions composed. The rubrics were based on a scale that ranged from minimally acceptable to exemplary. Rubrics set the standard for what teachers should expect from their students. The authors recognized that teachers should be prepared to create their own rubrics.

Bainer and Porter (1992) completed a study on the concerns of five third-grade teachers during their first year of using a holistic scoring method for evaluating narrative writing. The subjects participated in two one-hour training sessions on holistic scoring and interpreting the standards of the rubric. The teachers were instructed to return to their classrooms and use the rubric to evaluate their students' papers.

Five months later the teachers were asked to respond to questions concerning the use of the holistic scoring methods they employed in their classrooms. Three predominant areas of concern emerged from the infor-

mation collected. Of the concern statements 94 were directed toward the problem of time. Some of the subjects felt that they had to dedicate more time in concentrating on the rubric, rather than the students' papers. Others felt that using the rubric saved time because they were evaluating the overall work. A majority of the subjects felt that the rubric gave them a point of reference that caused a reduction in subjectivity. Concerns regarding the meaning and interpretation of the scoring to parents were expressed by 12.4 percent of the subjects.

The authors caution that teachers should be knowledgeable about the development of rubrics in the classroom and they should recognize when it is appropriate to use holistic scoring. Rubrics must have clearly defined outcomes at each level. Teachers must also be trained in writing concise prompts that elicit the desired student responses.

The purpose of an article written by Pate, Homestead, and McGinnis (1993) was to describe how rubrics can be successfully used in alternative assessment. A definition of the rubric was stated as "a scaled set of criteria that clearly defines for the student and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like" (Pate, Homestead, and McGinnis, 1993, p.25). Rubrics have been used in a variety of settings at this point in time. Portfolio assessment, writing performance, and district outcomes have all been scored by rubrics. Recently teachers began using them as advance organizers. In this case, the organizer was presented before instruction so that students are aware of the learning expectations.

In this article two eighth grade teachers redesigned their curriculum while integrating subject areas and emphasizing hands-on learning pro-

jects. As part of a unit on human interaction, the students selected topics, developed projects, and created rubrics to accompany the projects. One group of students selected the topic of animal testing. They concentrated on gathering information form a variety of sources. Then they focused on a presentation to communicate the answers obtained through their research. The students developed rubrics to evaluate the content of their projects and to evaluate their presentations. The middle school students who participated in this project were most enthusiastic about creating their own assessment tools. They informally reported that they were graded on concepts that were important to them, rather than ideas dictated by the teacher.

In an article by Gregory (1994) the author developed a rubric to use as a tool for assessing students' writing assignments. The author emphasized that the rubric would be utilized as a form of assessment and not for grading purposes. Therefore, components of the rubric were not given numerical quantities. The rubric resembled a checklist and allowed for a developmental look at the writing process. The rubric not only indicated areas necessary for growth, but areas where progress was evident. The rubric was divided into three specific areas. Creativity, inner layers, and surface features were these three major components. Under each component were six specific competencies. Next to each component was a place for a notation representing student performance as well as a place for comments and observations.

An effective rubric design was the focus of an article by Jensen (1995). The author states that, "Rubrics need to be designed to direct the teacher and the student to the outcome in language that the student can

understand" (Jensen, 1995, p.35). Engaging students in an authentic science unit on energy was the author's goal for his class of eighth and ninth grade students.

The author began by using models in a lab to demonstrate the transformation and movement of energy. Class discussions and readings were used as follow-up activities. Then the students were assessed in a variety of activities promoting creativity and problem solving. Some of these activities included creative writing assignments and formal lab demonstrations. The author developed rubrics to assess each one of these activities. The rubrics employed in this case were based on a pass or fail criteria. The students had to pass each topic as specified by the levels indicated on the rubric, but the scores were not averaged into the students' final grades. The students were given several opportunities to meet the criteria.

Authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, and rubrics are familiar terms used when discussing alternative assessment. Alternative assessment requires students to demonstrate, produce, or create meaningful tasks. An authentic assessment allows a student to demonstrate a skill within a real-life context. Alternative assessment is an approach in which the student actively engages in the learning and assessment process. A performance-based assessment occurs when the student is assessed on a particular task that is clearly specified by the teacher (Cohen & Spruill 1990).

Rubrics are a scoring method that can be used to evaluate a wide variety of assessment practices. There are many types of rubrics. An

analytic rubric is used to assess a student's response to a particular prompt by awarding credit to each essential element. A holistic rubric is used to measure an entire student response based on a set of predetermined guidelines. A rubric can also be described as a scoring guide that differentiates among a group of student products.

Planned Solution Strategy

The research cited in this chapter suggests that a variety of methods for employing alternative assessment techniques have been explored. In cases where authentic and performance-based activities have been used to evaluate learning, students have been responsible for carrying out projects and assignments. In many of these activities students applied their knowledge and skills across many subject areas.

The authors cited in the articles met with reasonable success when using rubrics and/or holistic scoring practices. The rubrics described in the research come in a variety of formats. However, they all include the essential components necessary for completing the assigned projects.

The author of this report assigned authentic and performance-based projects to her students over a 12 week period. The students were involved in the designing of developmental rubrics to be used as a method of assessment as well as a plan for completing quality assignments. The projects were assigned every two weeks and replaced traditional daily homework assignments of spelling and math practice. It was expected that by actively engaging the students in meaningful projects and allowing them to determine the objectives for evaluation, student attitudes and efforts for following through and completing projects would improve.

CHAPTER III

Method

During the first week of implementation the author secured parent and student permission for proceeding with the program. Letters were sent to the parents of the students to communicate plans for an alternative homework routine, to explain the goals of the program, and to obtain permission for participation (Appendix B, 37). The author believed that the success of the program relied on communication with the parents of the target group.

The program began with the introduction of two types of developmental rubrics. The author showed examples of simple rubrics and helped the students to identify specific components of a product rubric and a procedural rubric. The class developed a simple product rubric designed to evaluate the organization of individual students' desks and classroom materials (Appendix C, 39). Students used this rubric as a checklist at the end of each day. This rubric was used throughout the course of the program, and was particularly helpful to three students whose individual education plans include improvement in the area of organization.

At the beginning of the second week the author reviewed the components of a rubric. The students developed a procedural rubric to self-evaluate the planning and completion of routine homework assignments (Appendix D, 41). The rubric was used throughout the week as a guide and a form of self-evaluation of homework assignments. It was necessary for

the rubric developed during the second week to be applicable to a variety of writing assignments, since the target group's regular assignments represent a variety of tasks and skill levels. The simplicity of the rubric may have inflated the results, but the students felt confidence in the level of success they experienced during the second week.

The students participated in a storytelling festival for the first project. During the third week of the program the author encouraged the students to select a book that was conducive to storytelling. The author discussed the steps involved in practicing a storytelling. The target group observed several professionals perform storytelling on video. With the help of the teacher the students developed a simple product rubric that reflected the essential components a storyteller should include in his presentation (Appendix E, 43).

During the fourth week the students continued to practice storytelling and to use the product rubric as a self-evaluation tool. At the end of week four, the students presented their storytelling and evaluated the project using the rubric developed in class. The students who successfully completed the project were encouraged to tell their stories to the primary class of physically impaired students. The students appeared to be highly motivated by the idea of "grading themselves".

For week number five the students were assigned project #2. This project involved the students in creating a variety of projects based on a "How To" book. At the beginning of the week the students visited the media center to select an appropriate book. "How To" books can include books with ideas on making art projects, cooking recipes, and playing

sports. The students developed a procedural rubric to accompany this project (Appendix F, 45). The author assisted students in gathering and obtaining materials for this project. The book selection process was a critical point in the process. Several students had to reselect a library book in order to complete the project successfully.

Project #2 was presented at the end of week six. The students used the procedural rubric to evaluate their work as they did for project #1. The students presented what they made and explained the steps used for creating their projects. The students had the option of conducting a mini-lesson to show fellow students how to make the project or to present a sample made at home. Thirteen members of the target group chose to present a sample rather than teach a lesson. The mini-lesson option may have been too ambitious on the author's part, considering this particular target group.

During week seven the author scheduled individual conferences with students on their progress with the program. The teacher held an open forum with the students to discuss questions or problems concerning the program. The students began discussing ideas for the culminating activity. The students expressed enthusiasm for selecting the objectives that were used to evaluate each project. Most of the students' questions concerned the nature of the next project.

Project #3 incorporated research, art, and social studies skills. The students completed a state report. The students were given access to the media center and were supplied with any materials needed to

complete the project. During week eight the students developed a product rubric to assist in the planning and self-evaluation of project #3 (Appendix G, 47).

Project #3 was presented at the end of week nine The students were expected to plan and work on completing the project throughout the week. The students and author evaluated the project as described in week four. The finished projects were displayed in the media center for the remainder of the school year.

At the beginning of week ten the author and her students began planning for the culminating project. This project was authentic in nature. The students made decisions throughout the entire process. Several subject areas and skills were incorporated in project #4. Paraprofessionals were involved in assisting the students with materials and making plans.

The author directed the students in planning and organizing an end-of-the-year celebration. Every member of the target group chose a friend from a mainstream class to invite to the celebration. One group created invitations. Some students were responsible for polling classmates and making graphs to determine favorite foods, drinks, and activities to be used for the celebration. Another group of students used the newspaper to identify sales on items needed and used the telephonebook to locate stores for purchasing those items. For example, paper products were identified as being on sale at a local super market and a pizza restaurant was selected because of its location and its prices. A group of students from the target group designed awards to be presented to teachers,

paraprofessionals, and fellow students. Another group selected a song to sing and wrote a short skit as entertainment.

The author intended to have the target group responsible for as many aspects of the culminating activity as possible. The students did most of the work in small groups. The students developed rubrics together to ensure that all aspects of their work were considered carefully. The rubrics were instrumental in helping the target group plan with minimal supervision.

The students continued working on project #4. The culminating activity took place at the end of week eleven. During week twelve the students completed the Project Attitude Survey. The author compiled the results from the survey. The author completed the student progress reports for the fourth grading period and determined the number of behavior indicators represented on the progress reports. Finally, the author analyzed and compiled the results of rubrics for projects 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Timeline

Week	Activities
One	Introduced developmental rubric Showed examples
	Constructed product rubric for organization of student books and materials
	Obtained parent permission and clarified new homework routine

Two	Constructed procedural rubric for weekly spelling assignments Reviewed components of a developmental rubric research rubric and emphasize specific criteria
Three	Assign project #1 Allowed access to media center and time for research Developed simple product rubric
Four	Shared and evaluated project #1 Completed self-evaluation using the product rubric Shared project #1 with primary P.I. students
Five	Assign project #2 Allowed access to media center and time for research Developed a simple procedural rubric Assisted students in gathering and preparing materials
Six	Shared and evaluate project #2 Completed self-evaluation using the procedural rubric Conducted student lessons
Seven	Conferenced with individual students on concerns and progress Held informal class discussion on problems or opinions of newly implemented program
Eight	Assign project #3 Helped students plan and gather necessary materials Developed a simple product rubric
Nine	Shared and evaluated project # 3 Completed self-evaluation using the product rubric Displayed projects in Media Center
Ten	Allowed students to decide on the culminating project Grouped students according to selected activity Helped students with planning and gathering materials

	Allowed students to collect information from the media center Developed a rubrics to assess group projects
Eleven	Evaluated and participated in culminating activity Completed Project Attitude Survey
Twelve	Collected data Compiled and analyzed results

CHAPTER IV

Results

Three outcomes were written for this proposal. The first outcome focused on the effects of developing rubrics as standards for exemplary assignments. This outcome was developed in an effort to determine if students are better equipped to produce quality assignments when they understand the expectations and objectives. After twelve weeks of developing rubrics, the entire target group had not completed the assigned projects with 70 percent accuracy according to the rubrics developed in class.

Table 1

Accuracy of Student Projects

Individual Students	Accuracy as Measured by Class Rubrics Project #1	#2	#3	#4	Average
1	50%	0%	50%	100%	50%
2	0%	75%	50%	100%	56%
3	70%	50%	70%	100%	73%
4	80%	100%	100%	75%	89%
5	100%	50%	70%	75%	74%
6	100%	100%	70%	100%	93%
7	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
8	0%	100%	100%	50%	63%

(Table 1 continued)

9	50%	75%	70%	50%	61%
10	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
11	50%	50%	80%	75%	64%
12	100%	75%	80%	100%	89%
13	50%	75%	50%	75%	63%
14	100%	50%	100%	100%	88%

According to the data presented in Table 1, eight students from the target group achieved an average score of 70 percent or better on the four projects. Although the first objective was not met, of the six remaining members of the target group who did not reach the 70 percent criteria, the average scores fell in the 50 to 60 percent range. The author recognized that these scores reflect improvement. Only three projects were not attempted during the twelve week period compared to the 32 projects that were unattempted in the first half of the school year.

The second outcome deals with the deficit documented in the number of projects and assignments completed by the class. After twelve weeks of developing rubrics to assess authentic, performance-based projects, the progress reports of individual students in the target group reflected a decrease in the number of behavior indicators by 80 percent. Table 2 represents the total number of behavior indicators the target group earned during grading periods one, two, three, and four.

Table 2

Number of Behavior Indicators					
Behaviors	Grading Period	1	2	3	4
Completing Homework		7	10	6	4
Completing Classswork		4	5	4	2
Working Independently		4	3	2	1
Planning and Organizing Work		2	4	4	2

According to the data represented in Table 2, the target group's progress reports reflected a decrease of 60 percent in grading period 3 as compared to the number of behavior indicators in grading periods 1 and 2. Also, a decrease of 80 percent was indicated for grading period 4. Therefore, the second objective for this program has been met. The author believes that the maturity of the students by the end of the school year, as well as the students' familiarity with the expectations held by the author, may have had an impact on the outcome. The small number of projects may have influenced the percentage of completed assignments for the fourth and final grading period, since the traditional homework and classwork assignments were greater in number

The third outcome involved students in performance-based activities, allowing them to be actively involved in the learning and assessment process. Authentic activities based on real life situations encourage students to apply previously learned skills. After twelve weeks of participating in authentic, performance based projects, the target group demonstrated a positive attitude toward completing projects by 80 percent as measured by a teacher-made attitude survey.

Table 3

Results of the Project Attitude Survey

Survey Items	Number of Strongly Positive Ratings	Number of Positive Ratings
#1	6	5
#2	7	5
#3	3	9
#4	3	8
#5	5	6
#6	8	4
#7	5	8
#8	9	3
#9	7	5
#10	5	8
#11	7	4
#12	5	8
#13	4	8

The data represented on Table 3 shows that 13 items on the survey received a positive rating by at least 80 percent of the students. According to this data the third objective has been met. The target group responded enthusiastically to creating the rubrics and projects, as well as the format of the survey itself.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

This program was designed to improve work quality and increase work completion. The development of rubrics is a critical form of alternative assessment that allows students and teachers as evaluators to focus on important components and criteria. Through observation and the maintenance of a log, the author noticed that students from the target group were more involved in their assignments and better able to focus and plan an acceptable project.

Because the rubrics constructed in this program were designed as a flexible means of assessment, they afforded the students an opportunity to be assessed developmentally. Rubrics allow the teacher a means with which to assess students in wide array of activities. A simple rubric can be constructed for assessing many activities with any age or skill level. Giving the target group the opportunity to construct their own rubrics gave them a sense of ownership and engaged them in learning how to improve their performance.

The author will continue to use rubrics during the following school year with a similar group of students. The author intends to develop an alternative grading system and grade book based on the information gained from this report. The author's gradebook will be organized by

student rather than subject. The author will utilize rubrics and checklists combined with individual resource folders or portfolios. The system should meet the needs of the students who should be evaluated developmentally, because the class consists of many ages and skill levels.

The author will share the information from this report with colleagues and other professionals. A copy of this report will be given to the principal of the program site, as well as the district supervisor of the program for the physically impaired. The author intends to assist the teachers on her team in developing rubrics and other alternative assessment techniques for the upcoming school year.

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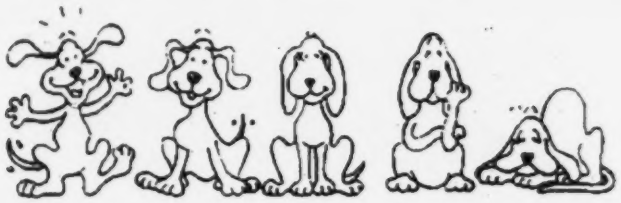
APPENDIX A

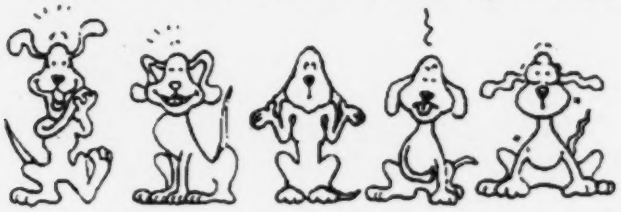
PROJECT ATTITUDE SURVEY

PROJECT ATTITUDE SURVEY

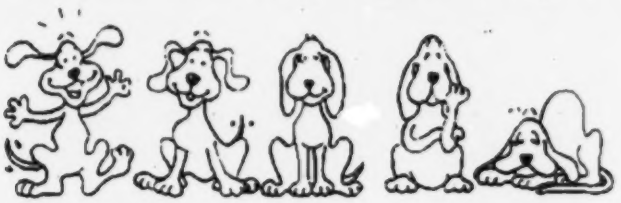
1. How do you feel when your teacher assigns homework?



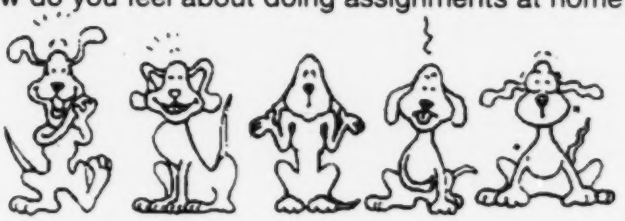
2. How do you feel when your teacher assigns a report or project?



3. How do you feel about doing assignments on your own?

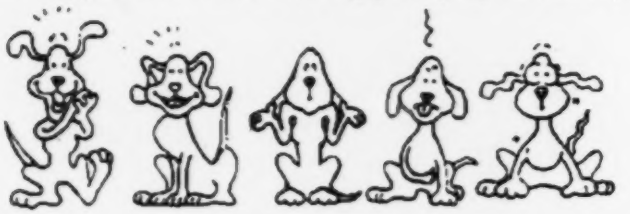


4. How do you feel about doing assignments at home?

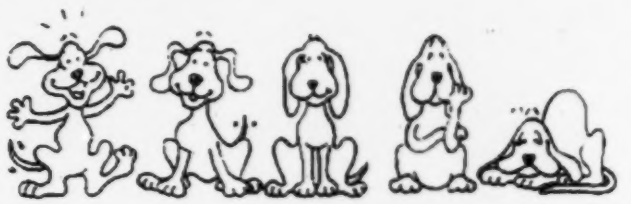


5. How do you feel about sharing your projects with friends or classmates?

6. How do you feel about sharing your projects with your teacher?

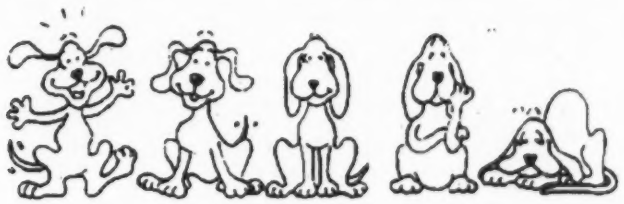


7. When you are assigned a project, do you have enough information to complete it on your own?

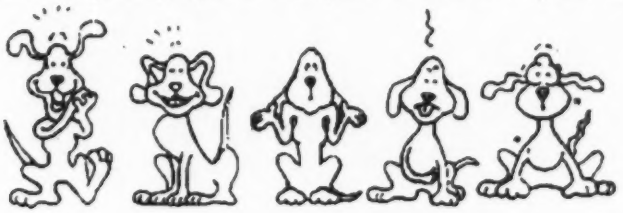


8. Do you believe the grades you have earned on your projects are fair?

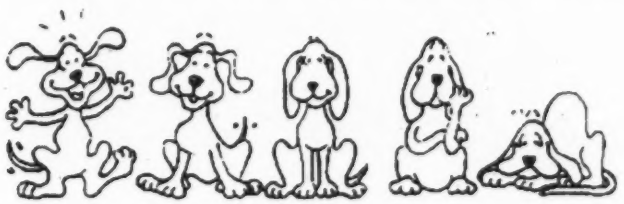
9. What does your teacher think about your projects?



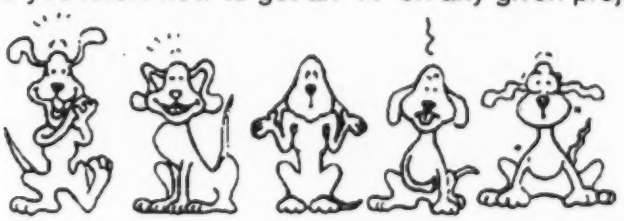
10. How do your projects compare to those of your classmates?



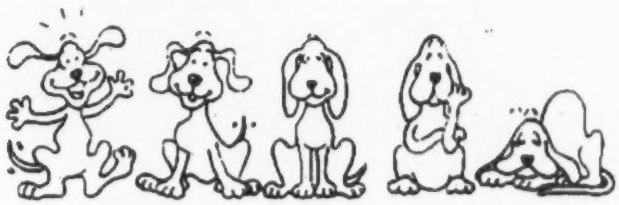
11. Is it important for students to complete projects on their own?



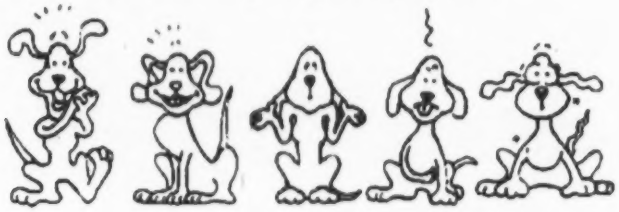
12. Do you know how to get an "A" on any given project?



13. Does having a rubric help you when you are working on an assignment?



14. Are rubrics a fair way to grade projects?



APPENDIX B

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Parents,

I am in the process of completing a master's degree in exceptional education. My final assignment is to propose and implement a research project. I would like the students in our class to be involved in the project with your permission. The students would be involved in planning and assessing their own assignments and projects in an effort to promote independence and responsibility.

I will need your permission before I begin implementation. There is a chance that the results of this project will be published, although no student names will be used. Please sign below if you would like your child to participate. If you have any questions please contact me at school (000-0000) between 7:30-8:00 a.m. or 2:00-3:05 p.m.

Sincerely,

Ms. Thomas

Parent Signature_____ Date_____

Student Signature_____

APPENDIX C

PROCEDURAL RUBRIC/DESK ORGANIZATION

PROCEDURAL RUBRIC/DESK ORGANIZATION

ACTIONS	YES?	NO?
FIRST..... Are all of my papers put away in the right folders?	☐	☐
NEXT..... Have my materials (pencils, scissors, markers, etc.) been put in the correct containers?	☐	☐
THEN..... Are my books, notebooks, and folders stacked neatly inside my desk?	☐	☐
FINALLY.... Did I check inside my desk, under my desk, and all around for misplaced materials or trash?	☐	☐

APPENDIX D

PRODUCT RUBRIC/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

PRODUCT RUBRIC/HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

IMPORTANT ITEMS	0 not at all	1 sometimes	2 all the time
Name and mailbox number at the top	0	1	2
Written neatly	0	1	2
Assignment completed	0	1	2
Used complete sentences	0	1	2
Paragraphs indented	0	1	2
Capital letters used correctly	0	1	2
Punctuation marks used correctly	0	1	2
Title included	0	1	2
Corrected spelling	0	1	2
_____ (student choice)	0	1	2

RATING SCALE TOTAL POINTS _____

A=20-17 B=16-13 C=12-9 N=8-4 U=3-0

APPENDIX E

PRODUCT RUBRIC/STORYTELLING

PRODUCT RUBRIC/STORYTELLING

IMPORTANT ITEMS	RATING 0-2		
Story selection	0	1	2
Speaks clearly	0	1	2
Uses expression	0	1	2
Remembers the story	0	1	2
Uses sound effects, props, or puppets	0	1	2

TOTAL _____ _____

RATING SCALE: A=10-9 B=8-7 C=6-5 N=4-3 U=2-0

APPENDIX F

PROCEDURAL RUBRIC/HOW-TO BOOK PROJECT

PROCEDURAL RUBRIC/HOW-TO PROJECT

ACTIONS	YES?	NO?
FIRST.....Gather all materials.	☐	☐
THEN.....Plan and write down the steps for making a sample of the product.	☐	☐
NEXT.....Complete the project at home.	☐	☐
FINALLY..Present the project to classmates.	☐	☐

How many "yes" answers?
Four=A Three=B Two=C One=N Zero=U

APPENDIX G

PRODUCT RUBRIC/STATE REPORT

PRODUCT RUBRIC/STATE REPORT

IMPORTANT ITEMS	0 not at all	1 sometimes	2 all the time
Single page report that includes information found in the encyclopedia	0	1	2
Color-coded map that includes capital, cities, and bodies of water	0	1	2
State flag	0	1	2
Picture of the state bird or state flower	0	1	2
All materials displayed on a poster or showboard	0	1	2

TOTAL:_____

A=10-9 B= 8-7 C= 6-5 N= 4-3 U= 2-0